The Battle

By

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[CONTINUED.]

"He's a fine young fellow, that Philip Ames, isn't he?"

"Phil? Indeed he is. But if anybody tells you that he is easy to understand"—

"Gentle seems to understand him."

"Gentle thinks he does. Say, Mr. Jackson, you have Gentle worried, all right."

"I? How?"

"Oh, with all this bakeshop business. Before you came it was nothing but the wrongs of the poor. Now it's nothing but money making schemes."

"You think Philip is interested?" he asked casually.

"Interested? You know he is interested. Why, yesterday, Gentle was trying to talk tenement house reform to Phil, but he hardly listened. He was figuring out the profits of that electrical machine for kneading bread."

"Good!"

Haggleton was immensely pleased.

"I never saw Phil that way before," continued Jenny slowly.

"You like him, don't you?"

"Everybody likes him. I love him."

Jenny continued:

"Yes, he is changed. And this sort of encourages me."

"How so?"

Jenny stumbled on.

"You have made me see," the young woman was saying, "that there are two Philips—the one Gentle knows and the one you know."

She gazed at the picture.

"Yes," she added, with a contented smile, "that's it—two Philips. You have waked up the one that Gentle does not know. Why shouldn't I"—

"Two Philips? What a strange fancy!"

Haggleton spoke merely to make her go on.

"I tell you there are two Philips," she insisted. "One Philip loves this trained nurse. What's the matter with the other Philip loving me?"

She smiled up confidingly.

"Here is a new complication," thought Haggleton—"still another battle to be fought over Philip!"

"Do you really think that you can win him away from this girl?" he asked.

The answer staggered him.

"Do you really think that you can win him away from Gentle?"

What did this young woman know? Not that he was Philip's father, of course. But the rest of it she had gauged pretty accurately by intuition, no doubt.

Jenny began to pay her compliments to her hated rival.

"She makes me tired with her airs, and she ain't strong for you, Mr. Jackson," she added viciously. "When I met her I saw that she didn't care for me, and she doesn't know anything about me. You do, though I never told you."

"I have guessed a little, Jenny. I respect you all the more for your grit in returning here."

"Do you? I am glad of that. Well this Miss Margaret ain't so much of a

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much herself. It was her brother that put me on the downslide."

"Her brother?"

"Yes, the brother of the girl Philip is going to marry—this stuckup nurse! I've a good mind to tell Philip."

"Her brother is not her fault."

"No, I suppose he's mine. But I am going to tell him."

"Do you think that would be fair?"

"All's fair in love."

Haggleton looked at the firmly closed mouth and doubted his ability to persuade her.

"You know I like you very much?" he asked.

She nodded.

"And I admire you, Jenny, for your pluck and your honesty. You are good woman notwithstanding what is behind you—a fine woman. Are you going to do a mean thing and disappoint me?"

"Is it mean?" she asked.

"You know it is. You will lower yourself in your own eyes and in the eyes of all of us. It would be unworthy of you."

Jenny sat silent.

"I won't tell," she finally said. "I will play fair. I do it only for your sake."

"You do it because you are the fine woman I knew you were."

He bent forward and kissed her lightly on the cheek. She furtively wiped her eyes.

"But I am going to fight for my other Philip to the end," she declared defiantly, "just as you are going to fight for yours."

"That's understood. Now, Jenny, something else. When this bakeshop scheme comes off you'll get eight a week. We're going to brighten up your life and your father's."

"There is only one thing that can brighten up my life, and father—well, he has no hope for the future."

"Ah, yes, he failed in business?"

"He had an oil business in Iowa. But the trust couldn't let us go by. John J.'s wagons undersold us at our own door. Now father is a helper in a cellar bakeshop."

"That is the law of business, Jenny—the survival of the fittest."

"Yes, I suppose so. But it's hard to prove that to those who don't fit."

CHAPTER X.

THE BATTLE'S ON.

"GENTLE knocked and entered.

"Ah, how is Mr. Gentle," said Haggleton, putting down his hat again, "and what brings him here?"

"I'll come right to the point, Mr.—Mr. Jackson." Gentle glanced around him cautiously. "I want to have it out with you before Philip comes in."

"I expect him later on to report on our bakeshop organization."

"Ah! And you ask what the trouble is! There you have it! We have nothing but bakeshops here, nothing but schemes for making money. I wanted you to study the problems of poverty with Philip"—

"Pardon me. That was not our arrangement. Understand, I am a poor man hustling for a living."

"A poor man! It's a wonder no one has recognized you yet!"

"The newspapers say I am away on my yacht. Nobody knows that I'm down here; nobody is looking for me."

"But Philip knows."

"Philip will be silent."

"That's the trouble, Mr. Haggleton. He's too much interested."

"The use of it is that it will help me to win my son. And he is worth winning. Besides, it has another use—as an object lesson to all you kickers. Look at this room and think what it was."

Haggleton looked significantly around at the evidence of his driving power. His eye stopped at the two windows facing the East river, with their view of Brooklyn bridge.

"By the way," he asked, "what's the matter with joining these two little windows into one large observation window? We shall have the finest view in the city."

"What about the landlord?" asked Gentle.

"The landlord never objects to improvements in the property if the tenant pays for them. We'll pay for that window."

"Philip is demoralized," grumbled Gentle.

"Mr. Gentle, you are just getting acquainted with him. He's my son."

"He is fascinated by the idea that John J. Haggleton is doing this extraordinary thing."

"Just so, Mr. Gentle. And he will be more fascinated when he knows why John J. Haggleton undertook to do it."

"It was a clever move."

"No. It has turned out to be a clever move. I am gaining ground with the boy every day, but that's not why I am doing it. I am sixty years old, Mr. Gentle, and used to my comforts. Do you think I'd stand all this because it was a clever move? No, sir! I stayed down here on account of a few little words that my son fired at me. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'You've got to do your own loving yourself.' Heavens! That hit me hard! I'm not getting sentimental. I'm going to fight you for all I'm worth, Mr. Gentle, but when you've played your last card and told my boy the worst you can tell about me, then, anyhow, he's got to know that his father came down here and lived in a tenement"—

He stopped a moment.

"Because his father wanted to do his own loving himself."

"Yet you would influence him to be hard and selfish."

"I want him to be a fine business man."

"And I," rejoined Gentle slowly, "want him to be a fine man."

"H'm! I don't expect my son to be a business man and nothing else. I'm glad to have him study these problems of poverty. All I ask is that you and he be reasonable. Suppose we draw up a plan that will satisfy all of us. I'll put up one million, two millions, five millions, if we can work out some sound scheme of public betterment."

"Five millions?" gasped Gentle.

"Yes, sir, five millions. And I should want the work of carrying out such a scheme, the executive work, to be in your hands."

Gentle reflected. It was a great chance for him, and—what touched him far more—a great chance for the poor. What could he not do with so much money? A sudden thought struck Gentle. Oh, ho, here was the nigger in the wood pile. John J. was John J. still.

"Then Philip would know his father?"

"Of course."

"And his mother? What about her?"

Haggleton was ready for him. He never made a proposition without having prepared it in all details, foreseen all objections. So now he answered readily:

"We will tell Philip that there was trouble years ago between his mother and me. I'll admit that I was much in the wrong—absorbed in business; too keen about money. That ought to fix it."

"Oh, no, not with Philip. It is too vague. He must know exactly what the trouble was."

"Out with it!" exclaimed Haggleton. "You mean that Philip must see that statement."

"I mean that justice must be done to a noble woman."

But Haggleton presented his arguments with restrained vehemence.

"You talk about my wife and the wrong I did. I can't atone to her, can I? For she is dead! If I atone to anybody I've got to pay to the living, have I not? After all, that was what his mother wanted—to have Philip do good with my money. Now he'll do more good than she ever dreamed of. I'll put aside—what did I say? Five millions? I'll put aside ten millions for a great battle against poverty!"

"Ten millions!"

"Ten millions, but not one dollar unless I get my son."

"There still remains your wife's statement," said Gentle.

"You are bound by your promise to see her wish carried out, are you not?" argued Haggleton. "Now, if it is accomplished without the statement"—

"See! You think that I ought to destroy it?"

"Don't you?"

Haggleton followed up the advantage already won.

"You have considered yourself and my dead wife in the matter," he pointed out. "But what about Philip? Suppose he preferred not to see this statement—suppose he hesitated? You would advise against it, would you not?"

"In the circumstances I—I think I would."

Haggleton bent, held out his hand.

"Then we'll leave it to him," he concluded, "but not until I say the word."

Gentle nodded assent. The practical man of affairs had shown him how to carry out the dead woman's wishes without unnecessary harm to the living.

Philip entered.

"Well, did you succeed?" asked Haggleton, watching Gentle out of the corner of his eye.

"Indeed I did," exulted the young man. "I got the kneading machine on credit with a hundred dollars paid down."

"And how about the flour?"

"The Wisconsin mills will furnish it to the combination at 15 per cent off the jobbers' price."

"They will accept thirty day notes from the different bakers?"

"Exactly. No trouble about it at all."

Haggleton turned to Gentle.

"You see," he pointed out, "we shall save on wages and material. We'll do a bigger business because we'll sell better bread—and cheaper bread." Then he turned to Philip again.

"How many bakers have come into the combination?" he asked.

"Six so far, but we can get more."

"Get more?" echoed the millionaire. "Why, within ten days all the little bakers on the east side will be tumbling over themselves to get in."

"They've got to come in," began Philip grimly, "or"—

"Or what?"

It was Gentle who spoke, and there was a world of meaning in his voice. This was Philip, the friend of the poor. Indeed, the boy had drifted far away from his teachings in these few days under Haggleton's influence.

Philip looked at him; then his eyes wavered. He saw the accusation in his old friend's face.

"They've got to come in, or go out of business."

"Philip," said Gentle quietly and very gravely—"Philip, my boy, do you realize that you are building up a little trust? That you will turn men out of work?"

The young man looked uneasy.

"A few men will be thrown out of work. But we'll give better bread and cheaper bread to the whole east side."

"Just so," declared Haggleton. And he added, "Incidentally I will prove that a poor man like Moran can conquer these tenement house conditions if he has any gumption."

Haggleton went on.

"We'd better take that empty flat across the hall for sleeping rooms. We shall need this one for offices."

"In a little while," he asserted, "you'll see Joe Caffrey at work in a clean shirt, with pool rooms cut out, and Moran will stop kicking."

"I doubt that, Mr. Haggleton," said Gentle dryly.

"As long as a man has no money he's a kicker about the wrongs of the poor, Mr. Gentle. Give him some, and he stops kicking. That's why Socialists are poor."

"Some Socialists are rich."

"Oh, yes," answered Haggleton, "parlor Socialists, but they never earned the money themselves."

Philip came to the assistance of his old friend.

"Still," he said, turning to Haggleton, "the main point is that things in this country are not fair between the rich and the poor."

Haggleton faced Philip and Gentle. He felt the time had come for a decisive statement.

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